


INTERIM REPORT
ON THE
HEALTH & SANITARY CIRCUMSTANCES
OF THE
OAKENGATES URBAN DISTRICT
FOR THE
YEAR 1942.





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Once again the Ministry of Health has required that the Report on the Health of the District shall be presented in an abbreviated interim form. This being so exhaustive statistical figures have been avoided and such as are given have been confined to those of a domestic nature and of local interest.

The remarkable freedom of the District from infectious (notifiable) disease is dealt with in the relevant section of the report. The complete absence of cases of Diphtheria and the occurrence of one case, only, of Scarlet Fever is outstanding.

Over the Country, generally, despite War conditions and the stringency of the times acute infective diseases have shown little or no rise with the exception of Cerebro-Spinal Fever - a disease of which group this District had 1 case. It may be, however, that that condition associated with maintainance of the good health of a country - cleanliness - has shewn some deterioration. The frequency of Scabies seems to denote a lack of this and Scabies has been much in the mind in the past twelve months.

Turning to that more chronic infective condition - Tuberculosis - over the Country there has been a rise following a prewar decline which had been continuous from the First War. In some measure to meet this a system of Mass Radiography has been evolved. To expedite the examination of patients and at the same time to bring within the scope of preventive medicine a large section of adolescence and young adults (the 20 - 30 age group) a system of X ray photography has been invented which should be the means of bringing to light many unsuspected cases. By this system of mass X ray examination the time should not be far distant when every adult will be subjected to this type of examination at the period of greatest susceptibility. The relationship of this disease to your District is dealt with at the end of the Report.

To combat and further prevention the Ministry of Health has made arrangements to deal with the possible onset and spread of Typhus Fever - a disease from which this Country is now completely free. The danger of this gaining a foothold lies in the large proportion of our population at present abroad returning to this Country and, coupled with this, the rapid means for that return. The Continent has not enjoyed this same freedom from Typhus and the danger is thereby emphasised.

Veneral Disease has shewn an unwelcomed increase in frequency and has been much discussed. To further prevention certain measures have been taken by Parliament to restrict, principally, the infected female being a cause for further spread and it is now possible to deal with such cases compulsorily - on report. Much diversity of opinion exists as to the relative weight to be given to medical and moral teachings in attempting to secure eradication.

Small-Pox, an infrequent and undesired visitor has evidenced itself at periods in the Year. Scotland has been mainly affected and only rare cases have occurred on this side of the Border and no epidemics have arisen.

A precautionary measure, new in so far as to its general applicability to this Country has had to be taken in relationship to static water supplies. This, one of the protective weapons used in the Defence of the Country, is by reason of its nature a possible breeding ground for mosquitoes. The steps to prevent this has been the subject of a memorandum from the Ministry of Health.

Preventive Medicine has become a State-Controlled Branch of the Science and during the Year much conjecture and publicity has been given to the possibility of making Medicine generally under this same control, in a socialised form. The opening of Health Centres to deal with all diseases with attendant Doctors and Specialists as required is envisaged and while it

would appear that some form of Service of this nature will result the shape and scope has still to be agreed and decided.

Complementary with the above the status of those Servants of Medicine, Nurses, has received much consideration and the resultant has been the stabilisation of working and remuneration.

In the immediate neighbourhood particular attention has been directed to the need for a higher standard of Cleanliness in Milk. In this connection preliminary steps have been taken, in association with the Local Agricultural College to formulate a scheme for local sampling. It is hoped by this means it may be possible to eradicate the substratum of milk producers who are at present supplying a liquid of a inferior standard of cleanliness.

It is pleasing to note that as a resultant of the special care and supervision of the Diet of Children there has been no adverse effects on the Health and Weight, as a result of the War. Among the people generally better use is being made of the more ordinary foods in the home and it has been found possible to live satisfactorily on the restricted rations now in force. The lessening of Neurosis reported over the Country has been ascribed to persons being more occupied and busy and free from the fear of unemployment.

The Medical Officer of Health takes this opportunity of thanking your Sanitary Inspector for his cooperation in the work of the Department. Additional duties, arising out of the times, make the Sanitary supervision more difficult and this needs to be constantly borne in mind when assessing the total work of this Department.

POPULATION.

No changes of domestic interest have been noted in the returns of population for the Year.

Certain Figures and Statistics supplied by the
Ministry of Health.

<u>Males.</u>		<u>Females.</u>
Live Births	88	88
Illegitimate	4	4
Still	1	1
Deaths of Infants under 1 year of age		9
Deaths(generally)	Males.	Females.
	60	51
Some causes of death:-		
	Pulmonary Tuberculosis	1
	Cancer	15
	Cerebral Haemorrhage	14
	Heart Disease	17
	Pneumonia	4

There was one death from acute infectious disease
(cerebro spinal fever)

AMBULANCE.

This service, now under the control of the Authority, is much in demand. Difficulties have been experienced during the course of the Year in retaining Attendants and the general supervision throws considerable responsibility on the Sanitary Inspector.

MORTUARY.

The building in Holyhead Road was inspected by a Ministry Official and he recommended alterations and additions to be carried out on the waiting and viewing rooms. This work was completed a few months after the visit.

SHELTERS.

These are kept under constant supervision. At the inspection made by the County Surveyor it was found that certain shelters were unsafe for use and as a result a closure was made.

Arrangements are being made to replace these structures of a more permanent nature.

SCAVENGING

In the present conditions this work is being carried out under difficulties which have not easily been surmounted. Labour presents the chief problem, which problem however, is not peculiar to this District alone. Towards the end of the Year complaints were of frequent occurrence and the whole presented a difficulty the solution of which, to give reasonable satisfaction to the householders, is not easy to find. The existence of pans and privies in the Area aggravate the trouble. Efforts have been made to make the terms of work and remuneration acceptable to the workmen and every endeavour has been exerted to provide an adequate number of vehicles in satisfactory working order.

VERMIN INFESTATION.

Complaints of infestation with rats have been received and these have been dealt with by the Rat Officer of the County Council with whom an arrangement for this work is in force.

Cases of human infestation with lice have been reported and a considerable amount of bedding and soft goods have been treated and cleansed at the Wellington Public Assistance Station. Houses have been fumigated and a number of mattresses have had to be destroyed.

WATER.

Not the least of the difficulties of the Local Administration has been the provision and maintenance of an adequate supply of water throughout the District. At the pumping station a continued service has been given despite the extensive repairs which have had to be made on the plant; the need for these repairs arising out of the wear and tear from continued use.

The Reservoir continued to give rise for anxiety: this on account of leakage and loss. This continued loss necessitated the calling in of a Consultant Engineer. On his advice the reservoir was emptied and attempts were made to repair the cracks in the structure. As the foundations of the reservoir are, in all probability, over pit workings it would seem that there is a real danger of future subsidence with renewed water storage difficulties. While these works of repair were being carried out the elevated tank was the main source of supply and with this limited reserve pumping facilities had to be restricted and not used to full capacity.

Another problem which has received much attention and consideration in the past is the provision of an adequate supply to the Ketley area. While in the Year minor improvements have given temporary benefit it would seem that to secure permanent satisfaction cooperative action will have to be taken with Water Undertakings in adjacent Authorities whose distribution service is closely linked with that of the District. Wellington Urban, Wellington Rural and Dawley Authorities would require to participate in such a scheme to ensure a constant and plentiful supply to the houses in this elevated area.

Extensions and connections have been able to be carried out in the period. Close collaboration with the Wellington Rural Council has led to the improving of the supply to the Trench District and the addition of a booster plant in this part has greatly facilitated matters and improved flow. Again in the Sinclair Gardens Area the Local Authority has helped Wellington Rural Council by giving additional flow when the Wellington Rural Council were unable to meet their obligations in that part. On the West Border the Shifnal Authority was able to meet the needs of a local establishment when a difficulty of supply arose.

The Public have been informed as to the steps to be taken in the event of air-raid damage to main supplies. An investigation was made of the local pools with a view to the estimation of the probable reserve available in the event of the major services being discolated and put out of use for a time. This work was carried out in association with Dr. Provan of the Agricultural College, Newport. The Chlorination Plant has now been installed and is in service. In addition to this safeguard the water is examined bacteriologically at frequent intervals and the results have been very satisfactory. The general consumption per head in the Urban Area has been about 20 gallons per day and rather less in the Ketley District. The whole system of Water Service is very complex and is, as has been seen, not giving entire satisfaction. To improve this, consultations have taken place between the Chairman of the Committee, the Consultant and Surveyor and while the more extensive readjustments necessary to provide an adequate supply cannot, at present, be contemplated greater cogniscance of the District's requirements has resulted from these talks.

SEWERAGE AND DISPOSAL.

The existing facilities continue to have to serve the Area. At the Sewerage Farm service has been able to be maintained without any major alterations: the installation of a new sludge pump has helped to improve the spreading. Effluent channels have been cleaned out and have been kept running satisfactorily. The very adequate sanitary accomodation provided in Stafford Road for public use has not been appreciated as it deserved. Complaints of wilful damage and misuse have been frequent and it would seem that the most drastic measures at the disposal of the Council will have to be brought into force to secure an abatement.

HOUSING.

There have been many complaints of the lack of accomodation throughout the Year. In addition, in some measure due to the difficulty in getting materials and labour, houses have been

allowed to fall further into disrepair and there have been many complaints of overcrowding. The Council have been fully conscious of this position and in the Autumn a deputation attended at the Ministry of Health with a view to securing permission to proceed with a scheme for new building. This application was unsuccessful.

MEAT AND FOODS.

The District continues to be served from the Central Abattoir at Shrewsbury. During the Year a quantity of foodstuffs have had to be condemned. These were, principally, tinned goods, meat and bacon and a quantity of cereals.

Acting as pioneers in the Area the Local Council opened a British Restaurant in the Autumn. This improvised building has been pleasantly adjusted for its new function and has been shown to be appreciated by the satisfactory patronage experienced since the opening. At mid-day a three course meal is obtainable and is available to consumers not only on the spot but also to homes in the neighbourhood for whose benefit there are 'carrying out' arrangements.

Such establishments fill a want which has been aggravated by the war time inability of permanent restaurants to meet the demands of potential customers. At the reasonable price a meal of considerable nutrimental value can be obtained and this to the factory worker is, a great advance on the 'sandwich' method.

Now that the Restaurant has been established attention might be directed to the variety and quality of the foods provided. The additions of soups of a nourishing nature would be appreciated by the parents of children in the poorer classes where the complete meal charge may be beyond their means. As the quantity of fat included is almost certainly too low the addition of cheese, to replace as an alternative the sweet, would be beneficial. It is difficult to overcome the tendency to hurry through with the food which, of necessity, is before the consumer on the table in all its completion but repercussions may be on the individuals digestive system

and this hurrying tends to limit the degree of sustenance obtained.

MILK AND DAIRIES.

Premises for the production and sale of milk are subjected to periodic inspection. This is an area of the smaller type of producer and here close supervision is necessary to maintain the purity of the product. To improve, control conversations took place during the Year with Dr Provan, the Adviser on Milk, with the view to the institution of a system of local sampling with subsequent bacteriological examination. No progress was made in this direction but it is hoped that this sampling and examination will be able to be carried out in the near future.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

This Year was marked by the high level of freedom from notifiable disease. This freedom is the greater when it is noted that the total of 18 cases reported were divided among 8 different types of illnesses.

1 case of Whooping Cough was notified and there was a complete absence of Measles.

Diphtheria gave rise to no cases. This satisfactory position may be credited to the large scale immunisation which has been carried out in the past six years. It should be the constant aim to maintain and advance this beneficial service.

A change in the scheme for diphtheria prophylaxis was made in the course of the Year: the County Health Department taking over the clinical side of this work. Now they hold themselves responsible for dealing with all children (there are a few exceptions) under 16 years in the District. The Local Authorities are continuing to transmit the biannual returns to the Ministry of Health and in the last return in December the number protected were 50.6% under 5 years and 56.74 over that age.

It is confidently expected that better results than these will be achieved during the next twelve months. 1 case of Scarlet Fever, only, was notified compared with 10 in 1941.

Other diseases were:-

Pneumonia	4
Erysipelas	3
Puerperal Pyrexia	4
Cerebro-Spinal Fever	1
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	3
Dysentery	1

As a result of the inability to secure accomodation at the County Council's Centres for the treatment of Scabies this disease has had to be dealt with locally. To meet the demand use was made of the Joint Newport and Wellington Rural accomodation at the Newport Isolation Hospital. This provision was of great advantage to the Authority as there was a large number of Scabies cases brought to notice. In addition, later on in the Year an auxiliary centre at Donnington was able to be used. This centre is situated adjacent to this District and is a convenience for such as can be treated as outpatients. Through the courtesy of the Master of the Wellington Institution bedding was cleansed and disinfected at his Public Assistance Centre; this Authority having no local provision.

The numbers on the Tuberculosis Register at the end of the Year were as follows:-

<u>MALES.</u>		<u>FEMALES.</u>	
<u>Pulmonary</u>	<u>Non Pulmonary</u>	<u>Pulmonary</u>	<u>Non Pulmonary</u>
1941 33	34	22	43
1942 36	38	25	43

This shows a slight rise on the previous Year particularly among pulmonary cases.

VENEREAL DISEASE.

Under the aegis of the Central Council for Health Education a series of lectures on the above was given locally.

These lectures, given by persons nominated by this Council, were well attended and received the patronage of Local Councillors and Medical Practitioners.

Signed. W.A.M. Stewart,
Medical Officer of Health.

15th July, 1943.

